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Viewing cable 04BOGOTA8900, US HOSTAGE STATUS: 18 MONTHS IN FARC CAPTIVITY

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Understanding cables

Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cable's unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

To understand the justification used for the classification of each cable, please use this [WikiSource](#) article as reference.

Discussing cables

If you find meaningful or important information in a cable, please link directly to its unique reference number. Linking to a specific paragraph in the body of a cable is also possible by copying the appropriate link (to be found at the paragraph symbol). Please mark messages for social networking services like Twitter with the hash tags **#cablegate** and a hash containing the reference ID e.g. **#04BOGOTA8900**.

| Reference ID | Created | Released | Classification | Origin |
|--------------|------------------|------------------|----------------|----------------|
| 04BOGOTA8900 | 2004-09-02 11:35 | 2011-08-30 01:44 | SECRET//NOFORN | Embassy Bogota |

Appears in these articles:

<http://www.semana.com/wikileaks/Seccion/168.aspx>

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 BOGOTA 008900

SIPDIS

NOFORN

GENEVA FOR JEFF DELAURENTIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/24/2014

TAGS: [CASC](#) [MOFS](#) [PGOV](#) [PINK](#) [PTER](#) [FARC](#)

SUBJECT: US HOSTAGE STATUS: 18 MONTHS IN FARC CAPTIVITY

REF: BOGOTA 2239

Classified By: Ambassador William B. Wood for reasons 1.4 (b), (c), and (d).

THIS IS AN ACTION REQUEST. PLEASE SEE PARAGRAPH 9.

SUMMARY

[¶1.](#) (S//NF) August 13, 2004 marked the 18-month anniversary of the FARC's kidnapping of three American crewmembers after a SOUTHCOM single-engine Cessna crashed. The most significant change since the one-year update in reftel (NOTAL) has been the initiation and impressive progress of the COLMIL's Plan Patriota Phase IIB, which we assess that the hostages are still alive given their high value. Sources indicate, however, that the FARC would kill the hostages rather than

BACKGROUND

[¶2.](#) (S//NF) August 13, 2004, marked 18 months of captivity for Thomas R. Howes, Marc D. Gonsalves, and Keith D. Stansell, whose SOUTHCOM Reconnaissance System single engine Cessna 208 Caravan aircraft crashed in northern Caqueta Department. Two other members of the crew -- U.S. citizen Tom Jannis and Colombian Army Sergeant Luis Cruz -- were executed shortly after the crash when they were first holding encampment.

STATUS AT EIGHTEEN MONTHS

[¶3.](#) (S//NF) Since our one-year assessment, the COLMIL has begun a major military offensive in the Yari region known as Plan Patriota Phase IIB

[¶4.](#) (S//NF) While the hostages are susceptible to a variety of jungle maladies, on balance we believe that they receive medical treatment and a operations, it is possible the FARC could use the hostages as "human shields" against COLMIL incursions into FARC strongholds.

[¶5.](#) (S//NF) The Embassy continues to collect all available intelligence related to hostage locations and has implemented a "Rewards for Justice" leaflets for dissemination around the areas of Larandia, San Vicente del Caguan, and Florencia on July 9. These programs have been successful in the Executive Office. Nevertheless, since leads go stale in a matter of hours, any rescue mission would have to be launched with U.S. forces based

FARC STRATEGY MURKY; COLMIL INCAPABLE OF HOSTAGE RESCUE

[¶6.](#) (S//NF) The FARC may consider the hostages to be a bargaining chip with President Uribe in negotiating a trade of political hostages for in hostage release by the FARC is highly unlikely; in the past they have always sought a quid pro quo.

[¶7.](#) (S//NF) Based on our analysis of the Colombian Military's training, equipment and tactics, the Colombian military is not capable of conducting a clear, however, given the likely remote location of the hostages when, and if a rescue is attempted by U.S. forces that some involvement of

COMMENT AND ACTION REQUEST

[¶8.](#) (S//NF) The hostages' fate remains uncertain despite the recent GOC proposal to release 50 imprisoned FARC members in exchange for political

[¶9.](#) (S//NF) The limited intelligence we get on the hostages seems to have a short life. We believe they are moved frequently, so intelligence collection